

# Steal This Hook!

## Life-or-Death Countdowns

By Doug Beyer



Welcome again to Steal This Hook! Today's theme is *life-or-death countdowns*: adventure hooks in which heroes race a countdown to disaster. How will the PCs react when the difference between living and dying is a matter of a few crucial days, hours, or seconds? Steal these hooks and work them into your **Eberron** campaign to find out!

### Touch of the Keeper

The innkeeper wakes up the PCs in the middle of the night. He says that a shipment of *potions of remove disease* was lost somewhere along the road between here and the shipment's destination: a disease-stricken village. He asks the heroes to help find the courier, and recover the shipment and deliver it to the village. Time is short; people are dying from the disease there every day, plus the innkeeper's sister and brother-in-law live there. Because of that, he worries that they might fall prey to the disease as well. Though the road to the village winds through hilly bandit territory, he and others don't think that bandits took the shipment. The courier actually is the culprit since he diverted the potions to a higher bidder: a kobold mine that is infested with green slime. Can the PCs negotiate with the kobolds to recover enough of the shipment to save the village? What happens when it turns out that the unscrupulous courier travels from town to town *spreading* magical diseases (and selling his fake *remove disease* potions) in the name of the dark deity known as the Keeper?



### The Moon's Curse

That tusk made a nasty gouge -- but with the wereboar slain, the only matter the heroes must attend to now is curing the lycanthropy that lurks in the wounded PC's veins. Stranded in the midst of the Shadow Marches, locating belladonna (wolfsbane) will be difficult; and for it to be effective, the afflicted hero must consume it within an hour of the attack. If belladonna can't be found, then the countdown to the next full moon begins, which is when everyone can expect the afflicted PC to run amok in his new boar guise -- unless the heroes can find a cleric of 12th level or higher in the next three days. If that doesn't work, they can see about casting *remove curse* on the victim *during* the three-day full moon period. . . . But by that point, a traveling missionary of the Church of the Silver Flame has discovered the PC's condition. He offers to help, but he secretly contacts some allies to come capture the PC before he or she can become a threat to "the populace and to him/herself." In any case, only days remain before the issue is forced one way or another.

### The Secret of the Stolen Psyche

During a visit to a small town on the western end of the Towering Wood, Patriarch Dalin d'Vadalis falls victim to a rakshasa's dark spell. His body crumples and his soul is stolen away -- to be used for evil in the Demon Wastes. House Vadalis summons the adventurers to accompany Brumar d'Vadalis, Dalin's brother, on a quest into the

heart of the Demon Wastes to recover the patriarch's spirit. The clock is ticking: The soul must be restored to the patriarch's body in a matter of eight days, or he will die. Even worse, the rakshasa who cast the spell believes that the Vadalis family holds the key to freeing the imprisoned rajah overlords. If he can perform a divination ritual on the captured soul, he could trace the Vadalis bloodline to a secret branch of the family that associates with a noble blue dragon named Tarys. If the rakshasa learns of Tarys and the power she wields over certain Khyber seals, it could spell the beginning of a new Age of Demons.

## Countdown to the Year of Undeath

Dolurrrh is coterminous with the Material Plane only once every hundred years: the last time, when the Last War was in its infancy, the Realm of the Dead poured thousands of lost souls into Eberron. Now only days remain before it happens again -- and Thrane is about to make a crucial mistake. In the Mournlands near Thrane's border, a new manifest zone of Dolurrrh has appeared. The government of Thrane is arming paladins and commoners alike with flametouched iron swords, planning to attack the manifest zone and all undead within it once it "opens" -- however, the PCs have reason to believe that the restless dead who will be summoned there are actually the souls of innocent soldiers from throughout the history of the Last War, including citizens of Thrane and those who died on the Day of Mourning. The dead will be confused, mute and apathetic from the effects of Dolurrrh, may attack back at Thrane's troops out of bewilderment -- yet they have no desire to harm anyone. Can the PCs gather evidence to stop Thrane's tragic mistake? One of lost souls, a young general who died fighting for Cyre, knows the secret behind the Day of Mourning. Can the PCs learn enough from him to help rescue some of the dead from Dolurrrh, or even somehow redeem the Mournlands, before the Realm of the Dead ends its coterminous year?

## The Perils of Giant Wizardry

In an ancient Xen'drik dungeon built by an industrious, now-extinct species of hill giant, the PCs encounter deadly traps as well as aging mechanical wonders that, in their neglected state, are just as dangerous as the traps. This combined with the fact that the PCs must drag a large stone statue into the dungeon's depths to unlock a lost treasure makes for many life-or-death moments. A massive portcullis that once acted as an automated entry gate now slams shut at unpredictable times. The timing gear on a moving walkway is loose, causing the walkway to accelerate wildly or stop suddenly. An odd giant totem pole with rotating heads is a combination lock to open a secret chamber, but four of the five correct combinations will seal the chamber after a matter of seconds, and three of those will begin flooding the chamber with brackish water soon after. The central device of the entire dungeon is a mystic artifact that radiates power to the entire subterranean structure -- in fact, its energy has counterbalanced the withering hand of time for centuries. If the heroes can drag the stone statue through a shield of whirring blades guarding the artifact, they have a chance to remove the artifact -- but without the artifact's power, the ancient structure begins to collapse. The heroes may have only a dozen rounds to escape before the dungeon crushes them.

## Mini-Hooks

- As they regain consciousness after an ambush, the heroes are tied to a driverless House Orien coach that is hurtling toward the edge of a cliff.
- The heroes must rescue the noble's niece from a menacing spellgaunt ([Monster Manual II](#), or substitute another arachnid creature) before it begins the process of draining her magical abilities -- but they must cross a treacherous underground lake guarded by a chuul ([Monster Manual](#), or substitute another aquatic subterranean creature) to get to her.
- The heroes must capture the shaman of a Poison Dusk lizardfolk tribe to discern the nature of the deadly

poison she uses, before a valued NPC dies from an envenomed arrow wound.

- A child is lost somewhere in Breland's King's Forest -- time is running out before he will die of exposure.
  - A trapped room's ceiling begins to lower on the heroes, and they must answer three riddling *magic mouths* to escape.
  - An enchanted mask is found on a deserted galleon from Sarlona, and a series of bodies begin to show up, tracking the mask's path to the PCs.
  - During an unearthly storm, the heroes must rescue a family of dwarven travelers before a tornado sweeps them from their hiding place.
  - The rope suspending a lift platform is fraying during a fight.
  - A wedding in which a devious changeling has replaced the bride must be stopped.
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## About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC\_Doog.

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